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ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S 86TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL DAY

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 7, 1997

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow in San Francisco, which I am privileged to represent in the U.S. Congress, a special celebration will take place marking the 86th Anniversary of the National Day of the Republic of China. I rise to bring to the attention of my colleagues this, the "Double Tenth" celebration of freedom.

The people of the United States have a special bond with the people of the Republic of China [Taiwan], who have unflinchingly demonstrated to the world their commitment to democracy under steady pressure. The Republic of China is a vibrant, thriving nation for the present and a model for the future—a model characterized by strong economic growth and respect for basic human rights and democratic freedoms.

The Republic of China is an important partner of the United States, economically, culturally, strategically, and politically. I am proud to relay to the Double Tenth celebrants in San Francisco the support and best wishes of the Republic of China's many friends in Congress. I congratulate the participants in this festival of freedom on their 86th Anniversary National Day and look forward to celebrating this historic event annually for many, many years to come.

PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICAL DRUG POLICIES

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 7, 1997

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I believe that one of the areas in American public policy where debate is the most retarded and stunted is that of drug policy. For too many of us in elected office, debating drug policy means engaging in a competition to show how tough one can be, without regard for how intelligent one is. In many areas of public policy we have come to the thoughtful realization that good intentions do not necessarily solve a problem, and that persisting in failed policies may make political sense, but rarely serves as a useful way to achieve real progress in improving society. Unfortunately, none of this seems to have penetrated the area of drugs, where despite the enormous shortcomings of the current excessively punitive policy, which does not do nearly as much as we could do to reduce drug use, and, in fact, exacerbates some problems, elected officials appear afraid to reexamine the issue.

For this reason, I was delighted to read the report of the drug policy project of the Federation of American Scientists. A group organized by the FAS recently issued an extremely useful statement, embodying a set of principles for practical drug policies. The list of those

subscribing to these policies is an impressive one, and while I doubt that any single Member of Congress will agree with all of the principles—indeed I doubt that any single member of the group agrees fully with all of the principles—it represents a very important step forward in trying to produce rational discussion of public policy in the drug area, both because it seeks to break the taboo against precisely this sort of discussion, and because of the common sense embodied in the principles themselves.

Because I believe it is very important that we break out of the intellectual rut in which drug policy is now mired, I ask that this statement be printed here, along with the list of endorsers.

PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICAL DRUG POLICIES

As a step toward redirecting discussion and action around drug abuse control into more useful channels, we propose the following as reasonable and moderate principles for practical drug policies.

1. [Why drug policy?] Any activity that diminishes normal capacities for self-control can create dangers for those who engage in it and for those around them. Drugs that threaten self-control, either through intoxication or through addiction, are therefore matters of social as well as personal concern. This applies to licit and illicit substances alike.

2. [Science and policy] Drug policies should be based on the best available knowledge and analysis and should be judged by the results they produce rather than by the intentions they embody. Too often, policies designed for their symbolic value have unanticipated and unwanted consequences.

[Minimizing overall damage] Drug control policies should be designed to minimize the damage done to individuals, to social institutions, and to the public health by (a) licit and illicit drug-taking, (b) drug trafficking, and (c) the drug control measures themselves. Damage can be reduced by shrinking the extent of drug abuse as well as by reducing the harm incident to any given level of drug consumption.

[Forms of damage] The forms of damage to be minimized—whether caused by drugs or drug control measures—include illness and accidents, crimes against person and property, corruption and disorder, disruption of family and other human relationships, loss of educational and economic opportunities, loss of productivity, loss of dignity and autonomy, loss of personal liberty and privacy, interference in pain management and other aspects of the practice of medicine, and the costs of public and private interventions.

5. [Laws and regulations] Laws and regulations are among the primary means of preventing drug abuse. Lifting prohibition on a substance is likely to increase its consumption, perhaps dramatically. Some substances present dangers such that even limited licit availability, other than for medically supervised use, would be unlikely to yield the desired minimum-damage outcome. Therefore, we cannot escape our current predicament by "ending prohibition" or "legalizing drugs."

6. [Enforcement for results] Enforcement and punishment, like other policies, should be designed to minimize overall damage. As long as some substances are illegal or tightly regulated, there will be attempts to evade those controls and therefore a need for enforcement and sanctions, in some cases including imprisonment. The use of disproportionate punishments to express social norms is neither just nor a prudent use of public funds and scarce prison capacity.

7. [Stance towards users] Social disapproval of substance abuse can be a power-

ful and economical means of reducing its extent. Such disapproval should not be translated into indiscriminate hostility towards all drug users based solely on their drug use. Persons who violate the rights of others under the influence of intoxicants or in order to obtain intoxicants are to be held fully responsible for their actions, criminally as well as civilly.

8. [Tailoring policies to drugs] Alcohol is familiar and widely accepted, yet it shares the intoxicating and addictive risks of some of the illicit drugs. Current policies make alcohol too easily and cheaply available and allow it to be too aggressively promoted. The resulting damage to users and others is very large. Taxation, regulation, and public information are all justified means to the end of reducing that damage.

10. [What about tobacco?] Nicotine, as commonly used, is not an intoxicant. But its addictive potential is great, and chronic cigarette smoking carries severe health risks. The wide prevalence of tobacco use under current policies makes cigarette smoking the leading cause of preventable early death. More stringent regulation is needed to protect the public health.

11. [Valuing treatment properly] Successful treatment for people with substance abuse disorders produces benefits for those treated and for those around them. Treatment episodes that reduce drug use and damage to self and others but do not produce immediate, complete, and lasting abstinence ought to be regarded as incomplete successes rather than as unredeemed failures.

12. [Prevention] For drug abuse as for other ills, the more successful the prevention effort the less the need for remediation. Developing and implementing effective drug abuse prevention strategies, especially for minors, is an essential means of drug abuse control. Prevention messages should accurately reflect what is known about the effects and risks of the substances they discuss.

13. [Taking measured steps] Drug policies need to be updated as social conditions change and the base of scientific knowledge grows. Policy changes that can be introduced incrementally and evaluated step by step are to be preferred over sweeping changes with less predictable consequences.

14. [Integrity and civility] Debate about drug policies engages deeply felt values and therefore often becomes heated and even acrimonious. Civility and honesty about facts, proposals, and motives can serve both to improve drug policies and to advance the broader public interest in healthy political discourse.

These principles may seem straightforward, hardly needing to be said. That they are in fact controversial illustrates something important about the way drugs and drug policy now tend to be discussed.

The current drug policy debate is marked by polarization into two positions stereotyped as "drug warrior" and "legalizer." This creates the false impression that "ending prohibition" is the only alternative to an unrestricted "war on drugs," effectively disenfranchising citizens who find both of those options unsatisfactory. Polarization and strong emotions give rise to misrepresentations of facts and motives, oversimplification of complex issues, and denial of uncertainty.

In the face of strong opposition, some of those who favor fundamental changes in the drug laws have elected to concentrate on more modest proposals which they intend as way stations towards their unstated longer-term goals. Partly as a consequence, some of those devoted to maintaining or intensifying present anti-drug efforts have taken to dismissing all criticisms of current policies—